

>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 36 <<<<<<<

- 1) This is the true baseline passage for defining the separation of Catholic and Protestant understanding of the Pope and the papacy in general.

Matthew 16:13–20(ESV)

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

- 2) The Catholic Church interpretation of this passage teaches that:
 - a) Jesus established Peter as the leader of the apostles.
 - b) “The rock” refers specifically to Peter himself.
 - c) The “keys of the kingdom” symbolize governing authority.
 - d) This authority continues through apostolic succession in the Bishops of Rome (the popes).
- 3) The normal protestant view however is:
 - a) The “rock” is either Peter’s confession of faith, not Peter himself ...
 - b) or the “rock” is Christ whom Peter confessed.
 - c) Therefore, the passage does not establish a continuing papal office.
- 4) I found it interesting that the Eastern Orthodox view was slightly different:
 - a) Peter had a prominent role among the apostles, but not supreme authority.
 - b) Leadership in the church belongs to the college of bishops, not a single universal bishop.
- 5) I say all that to highlight the fact that this is truly a very difficult passage to interpret.
 - a) The simple truth is there is no real grammatical rule or other concrete way to tie the word “rock” to either of the three possibilities.
 - b) When we look at the words in the Greek or Aramaic, we definitely see a word play between the words for Peter and rock.
 - c) However, I do not personally see that as a determining factor in linking to an antecedent.
 - d) I have included some notes on this word play from ChatGPT and the end of the notes for this lesson – feel free to check them out.
- 6) Now, to further clarify this situation of Peter being the ruling authority and the bishops of Rome through history were all Popes we need to look at a few interesting facts.
 - a) First, it is accepted that Peter was in Rome and was martyred there.

- i) This is based on early church fathers writings and even inference in 1 Peter however, this is not historically verified.
- b) Second, the authority of Rome and the bishops of Rome being the supreme leaders of the church was something that developed gradually over centuries.
 - i) It was not that way from the very beginning.
 - ii) 3rd to 5th century saw more emerging claims of Petrin authority (i.e. the Bishop of Rome sat in Peter's seat).
 - iii) 6th to the 11th century saw the Roman Bishop's authority increase because:
 - (1) The Western Roman Empire collapsed.
 - (2) Popes then became important political leaders as well.
 - iv) Now, here is the surprise (at least it was to me) the actual formalizing of the role of the Pope as supreme leader of the Catholic Church did not take place until the first Vatican Council in 1869-1870.
 - (1) This council accomplished two things:
 - (a) Papal primacy (the pope has supreme jurisdiction over the whole church).
 - (b) Papal infallibility when speaking ex-cathedra on faith and morals.
 - (2) ex-cathedra is Latin for "from the chair."
 - (a) In Catholic theology it refers to a formal, authoritative teaching issued by the pope in his official capacity as the successor of Peter and bishop of Rome.
- 7) As we consider all of this, it appears to really set aside a major tenant of Jesus' teaching – that the disciples were not to seek who was greater.
 - a) Instead, they were to be in subjection to one another.
 - b) We also have the fact that in the other synoptic accounts of this confession and even the parallel in John, there is no mention of the rest of what Jesus says to Peter.
 - c) All this leads me to conclude that we are on absolute solid footing in our assessment of this passage – it does not support the Papal idea.
- 8) There is also the loosing and binding to consider.
 - a) These were a rabbinic concept that could have two meanings: to establish rules or to discipline.
 - b) The disciples would be involved in a certain amount of rulemaking in building God's community (such as determining what kind of conduct would be worthy of its members).
 - c) They would also have authority to discipline other members of the community.
- 9) Again, in context of this conversation, does it carry forward with the papacy?
 - a) In my opinion, no, it does not.

10) Continuing with verses 21-23 we read ...

Matthew 16:21–23(ESV)

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “**Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.**”

What was Peter’s first mistake?

- a) Rebuking the Son of God.
- b) Peter has confessed who Jesus was so it is clear that he knew exactly to whom he was speaking.

So, why would he do such a thing – or did he?

- c) Jesus first addresses him as Satan.
 - d) Perhaps, for the moment Satan is using Peter to tempt Jesus.
 - e) After all, He does address him as “Satan” and perhaps that is not figurative but literal in this case.
- 11) But, in his third sentence, He is truly speaking to Peter the disciple.
- a) He is saying to Peter – get your perspective right!
 - b) In essence, stop thinking about what you want and start thinking more about what God wants.
 - i) Christ would not have said that to Satan.

Do we ever need to hear Jesus tell us that?

- c) For myself, my answer is absolutely YES!

12) Obviously, Jesus thinks that is a message that all the disciples need to hear ...

Matthew 16:24–28(ESV)

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.** ²⁵ **For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.** ²⁶ **For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?** ²⁷ **For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.** ²⁸ **Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.**”

13) Jesus begins by upping the stakes so to speak.

- a) It is not just that you must think more about what God wants and less about your own wants.
- b) Jesus is saying it is our whole lives that we must conform to God’s will.

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- 14) He then goes on to describe the reward that awaits those faithful disciples who do comply with this command – the salvation of our souls.
- 15) In verse 28, when Jesus says some would not taste death (die) before seeing the coming of the kingdom, there are several things He might have been referring to:
- a) Peter, James, and John, who would witness the Transfiguration a few days later.
 - b) Those who would witness the Resurrection and Ascension.
 - c) Those who would witness Holy Spirit’s coming at Pentecost.
 - d) All who would take part in the spread of the church after Pentecost.
- 16) This is one of those cases where some folks reading this passage have assumed that Jesus was promising that the disciples would not die before he came back at the second coming.
- a) Perhaps the disciples themselves at first thought that.
 - b) However, we know that cannot be true – the disciples have died, so this passage must be interpreted differently.
- 17) The point here is that Christ’s kingdom would be coming shortly.
- a) If he is talking to only the twelve at this point then the only one who will die before His resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost would be Judas.
 - b) All the others were still alive.
 - c) If He is not talking to “just” the twelve then we don’t know how many others may have died in the interim – and hence, perhaps the “some.”
- 18) The bottom line here is of the 4 possibilities I listed a moment ago, there are really only two contenders in my opinion.
- a) I rule out the transfiguration because only Peter, James, and John are involved and they are not allowed to tell the others.
 - i) In that context, the statement Jesus made becomes nonsensical which of course cannot be.
 - b) As to the spread of the church after Pentecost, we know that it is on going so all those listening to him at that point are passed as well.
 - c) This leaves the resurrection and ascension and the Church’s establishment at Pentecost.

Which of those would you choose? Why?